

## DOD's Cultural Knowledge

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Gooren, Ph.D., *Section Head, Cultural Affairs & Information, Army Command Support Group, Royal Netherlands Army*—Armed Forces throughout the world face the kind of problems Montgomery McFate and Andrea Jackson analyzed in their July-August 2005 *Military Review* article “An Organizational Solution for DOD's Cultural Knowledge Needs.”

The experience of the Dutch Armed Forces in peacekeeping and stability operations, from the Balkans to Iraq and Afghanistan, is not that different from the operational demands facing U.S. military units. The need to understand local culture, the ability to communicate effectively, and the basic knowledge needed to prevent social blundering in an unfamiliar human environment have all become vital elements in military operations.

Preventing culture shock should indeed be taken seriously. Some years ago, the Dutch Command recognized that predeployment training required a kind of cultural training that is relevant to soldiers in the field. General guidelines issued by the highest military authority, then the Chief of the Defense Staff, included cultural awareness as an essential part of every mission-specific training course. In 1999, the Cultural Affairs & Information Section was created to provide instructors, conduct research, and offer advice on cultural affairs in every deployment area.

Currently, we have a mixed civilian-military permanent staff of 4, all with academic degrees in relevant subjects, and an additional 10 reserve officers, nearly all of whom are area experts and experienced instructors. We provide operational cultural knowledge by acting as a liaison office between military com-

manders and units on the one hand and the community of university experts on the other. Our task is to “translate” academic expertise into information that is militarily useful and relevant. Despite its limited size, my section has acquired substantial knowledge about many countries and cultures around the globe. In recent years, Dutch troops have deployed to Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Smaller troop detachments and staff officers serve on various missions in Aceh, Pakistan, the Middle East, Congo, Sudan, and Djibouti, all of which want expert advice from my staff.

Of course, we benefit from the limited size of our Armed Forces. The total number of all military personnel from all of our services is about 45,000. Most of our missions consist of a battalion-size task force with various support units, including air power, attached. But more important than scale is the fact that our pre-deployment organization is fairly centralized. All pre-deployment training is jointly coordinated by one central office, the School for Peacekeeping Operations, and is supervised by one joint Operational Centre at the Ministry of Defense in The Hague. But the main asset in the field of cultural knowledge is a small section of dedicated instructor-researchers who are part of the military community as well as specialists in their own areas of expertise. In my view, if the U.S. Department of Defense built a similar office as an all-services national center of excellence in cultural knowledge, it would make a major contribution to the tasks of operational commanders and troops in the field.

## Looking Ahead to Military Biotechnology

Christian Enemark, *Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Research*

*School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Canberra, Australia*—I refer to Ji-wei Guo and Xue-sen Yang's “Ultramicro, Nonlethal, and Reversible: Looking Ahead to Military Biotechnology,” which appeared in the July-August 2005 *Military Review*. When you decided to publish this article, did it not disturb you that it appeared to advocate violations of international law? As a matter of science and law, the authors' distinction between “biotechnological weapons” and biological weapons is false. With respect, I suggest that this article should not have been published without asking the authors at least to consider the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention in advancing their arguments about nonlethal military applications of biotechnology.

Article I of the Convention provides: “Each State Party to this Convention undertakes never in any circumstance to develop, produce, stockpile, or otherwise acquire or retain:

(1) Microbial or other biological agents, or toxins whatever their origin or method of production, of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective, or other peaceful purposes;

(2) Weapons, equipment, or means of delivery designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict.” (See on-line at <<http://fas-www.harvard.edu/~hsp/biologic.html>>, accessed 14 December 2005.)

The military's use of biological agents to achieve nonlethal effects would not amount to a “peaceful purpose” and as such would contravene international law. Arguably, the publication of this article was dangerous and immoral because it potentially undermines the international norm against biological weapons.

### Editor-in-Chief's Reply

*Military Review's* stated purpose is to serve as a forum for discussion of opinions and concepts, none of which we endorse and many with which we disagree. A disclaimer to this effect is clearly noted on our masthead. The virtue of providing such a forum is to give our readers the benefit of an inside look, with diminished risk of distortions imposed by a policy filter, into the real priorities of military establishments.

With regard to the article in question, it should be obvious that the potential applications of the futuristic weapons discussed would likely threaten Australia first if ever developed. Consequently, one would think that as a member of a Centre ostensibly dedicated to research into

the defense of Australia you would be grateful for the unusually candid insight this article presents; it provides a window into the thinking of at least some members in the military establishment of a nation literally in Australia's own backyard.

We disagree with your assertion that publishing the article was "dangerous and immoral." Quite the contrary, *not* publishing the article would have been dangerous and immoral—and highly irresponsible. By publishing the article we have exposed our readers to a line of thinking regarding the weaponization of leading-edge technologies that is clearly going on behind some closed doors in Asia. An editor of a journal or a defense analyst who failed to recognize the benefit of

such insight would be guilty of a serious sin of omission—clearly making a truly immoral choice—doing both his organization and his Nation a grievous disservice.

We appreciate you having taken the time to read *Military Review* and welcome your critique. We are confident that such interchanges are healthy and help stimulate, highlight, and clarify the ethical issues associated with the use of emerging technologies as weapons.

**Note:** Ji-wei Guo and Xue-senYang, the authors of "Ultramicro, Nonlethal, and Reversible: Looking Ahead to Military Biotechnology," were not available for comment. In the July-August issue we inadvertently transposed Ji-wei Guo's name.

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